



March 21, 2011

U.S. Naval Test Pilot School celebrates 66 years



The students, faculty and staff of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School celebrated 66 years on March 12, 2011.
(Official U.S. Navy photo by Kelly Schindler)

Standing in front of the the Navy's oldest and newest aircraft, the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School students, staff and faculty celebrated the school's birthday earlier this month.

On March 14, members of USNTPS gathered for a command photo in front of an NU-1B Otter and a brand new T-6B Texan II trainer, the Navy's oldest and newest aircraft spanning 55 years of naval aircraft evolution.

The school was founded on March 12, 1945 when the first class of "Flight Test Pilots' Training Program" commenced. The class graduated on May 30, 1945 with each student being presented with a diploma and a slide rule from Capt. A.D. Storrs, Commander of the Naval Air Test Center.

In 1961 USNTPS added a rotary wing curriculum making it the only U.S. test pilot school to have such training. In 1975 an airborne systems curriculum was added as well. Since its inception, 138 classes of test professionals have graduated from the school. USNTPS currently operates 12 types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for a total of 42 total aircraft onboard. Amongst those aircraft are five of the oldest flying aircraft in the Navy.



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The NU-1B DeHavilland Otter, Bureau Number (BUNO) 144670, has been in service with the Navy longer than any other aircraft. It was delivered to the Navy on Sept. 28, 1956 where it went into service with 13 other Otters at VX-6 in Antarctica, ferrying equipment and personnel to and from the south pole until 1966. Primarily used to instruct lateral directional stability characteristics, it was the last Navy Otter to fly in Antarctica and is the only remaining military Otter in the world. It has been with the Test Pilot School since it left Antarctica. The aircraft is one of three "tail draggers" here at the school.

The latest addition to the USNTPS stable is a T-6B Texan II advanced primary trainer. Throughout 2010, TPS has been receiving new T-6B's to replace its fleet of T-6A's. The T-6B adds a glass cockpit, heads up display (HUD), and a number of other upgrades to the platform. USNTPS uses the aircraft as its primary fixed wing trainer focusing on performance demonstration, spin, photo chase, and directional stability test techniques.

The new T-6B, BUNO 166075, arrived from the Hawker Beechcraft assembly plant in Kansas March 10, 2011 making it the newest aircraft in the Navy at that time.

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